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March 10, 2020

**TO:** Homeless Service Providers

**FROM:** Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,  
Public Health Officer & Director,  
Public Health Services

**RE:** **COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE EFFORTS**

I am sending you this communication on behalf of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) Public Health Services (PHS) department (local health department). The novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) global outbreak is rapidly changing day-to-day.

It is important to know that while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers that this is a serious public health threat, currently, the risk for the general American public remains low. That could, however, change at any time as the situation remains fluid. Globally, as of March 8, 2020, at 3:00PM, there have been over [109,832 cases and 3,803 deaths](#) associated with COVID-19. Nationwide, there have been [537 confirmed cases in the United States](#) (U.S.), including [114 in California](#), with numbers changing by the hour. It is important for you and your organization to continue to follow updates on the local, state, national, and global situations, as the virus inevitably will continue to spread for some time.

My last update provided an overview of County preparedness efforts. Since then, community-acquired infections have occurred in various U.S. locations. Even though we only have one presumptive positive, travel-related case in San Diego County, in the last week the disease has spread to over [100 countries](#), therefore, we must be prepared for an imminent pandemic.

As an organization serving people who are unsheltered/homeless, the County is asking you to share this information with your employees, as well as begin planning efforts for your organization. Included in this communication are links to some key guidance for your organization. This interim guidance is based on what is currently known. As further guidance is developed, this information will be posted on our [County website](#), as well as found on the CDC website.

- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#), February 2020
- [CDPH Guidance for Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events](#) March 7, 2020
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services At-Risk Individuals](#), March 28, 2019
- [Department of Veterans Affairs Disaster Preparedness to Promote Community Resilience](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services At-Risk Individuals with Access and Functional Needs](#), August 2, 2019

In addition, this letter provides guidance to you, your leadership, and your organization to prepare for a COVID-19 outbreak or pandemic. At this time, the County encourages your organization to:

- Sign up to get County News Center stories emailed directly to you [here](#) and encourage your staff to do the same;
- Review and disseminate the County of San Diego [Fact Sheets](#) to your staff;

- Develop and implement strategies to protect your workforce from COVID-19, while ensuring continuity of operations. (CDC recommends that during a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly);
- Review your organization's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding sick leave;
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding telecommuting (i.e., working from home);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding other social distancing strategies, such as videoconferencing for meetings and canceling large events;
- Develop or update pandemic planning documents;
- Develop or update any other guidance documents specific to serving the homeless, necessary to contain the spread of COVID-19, and
- Ensure review of all of the above documents by your leadership, employees, volunteers, and contractors.


The County of San Diego has an established preparedness and response system in place. This process brings together surveillance, criteria to guide evaluation of a patient under investigation, epidemiological investigation, public health laboratory testing, education and outreach, and levels of response. To date, the County has taken numerous actions in accordance with the [Consumer Version of the COVID-19 Response Plan](#).

I want you to know that we are all in this together with one singular mission, to protect the public and prevent the spread of this virus. I want to emphasize that your decisive leadership, action, and support are essential, and your partnership is greatly appreciated. If your employees or guests have questions or concerns related to COVID-19, please encourage them to call 2-1-1 for general information.

For additional information about the outbreak and associated resources, please go to the coronavirus websites at [CDC](#) and the [County of San Diego](#). There you will find the latest CDC guidance and local information, respectively. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [MOC.PHO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:MOC.PHO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov).

Thank you for your continued partnership and support to keep the residents of San Diego County healthy, safe, and thriving.

Sincerely,

  
WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.  
Public Health Officer & Director  
Public Health Services

cc: Helen Robbins-Meyer, County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Officer  
Nick Macchione, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Director